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## CECE holds advisory board meeting



*CECE Executive Director John Provo speaks to the CECE Advisory Board at the September 28 meeting.*

The center's advisory board meeting opened with personnel and project portfolio updates from Executive Director John Provo.

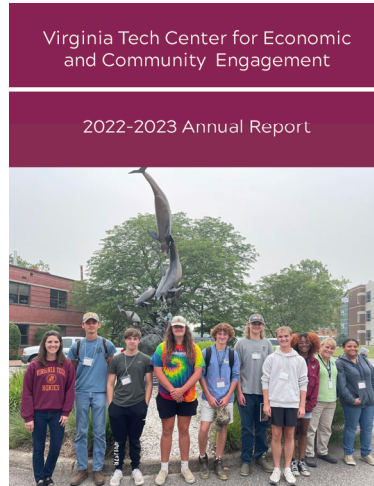
Chris Stephenson, a member of the nonprofit SPC4Life, a group of alumni from St. Paul's College dedicated to reimagining the college and keeping its traditions alive, spoke to the board about his organization's collaboration with Virginia Tech and his mission to bring educational and community-building opportunities to Lawrenceville, Virginia and Brunswick County.

Jason Schwartz and Allison Ulaky, previous graduate assistants for CECE, also spoke to the group. Schwartz and Ulaky talked about how their time with CECE prepared them for their current roles and the importance of experiential learning for students.

Associate Director for Community Innovations Scott Tate provided an update on the Vibrant Virginia program. The next phase of Vibrant Virginia will focus on engaging faculty in exploring particular questions or challenges in a community and also develop a community of practice and a new book project.

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## Explore CECE's annual report



Learn more about CECE's work in the last year. View our annual report here: [https://cece.vt.edu/content/dam/cece\\_vt\\_edu/cece-magazines/CECE%202022-2023%20Magazine.pdf](https://cece.vt.edu/content/dam/cece_vt_edu/cece-magazines/CECE%202022-2023%20Magazine.pdf)

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## Meet a CECE Advisory Board Member: Deborah Flippo, GO Virginia Region 8



*Deborah Flippo is the Executive Director of GO Virginia Region 8. Over the course of her career in economic development, she has served as the director of marketing for Joyce Engineering, Inc., the marketing manager for Engineering Concepts, Inc., and the economic development program manager for Draper Aden Associates. She also served on the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Board and as president of the Virginia Economic Developer's Association. She received her bachelor's degree in marketing from Virginia Commonwealth University.*

## **1. What was your first job and what did it teach you?**

My first job was waiting tables at the Shoney's in Charlottesville, Virginia when I was 16 years old. From this job, I learned a lot about multi-tasking and how much I love being around a lot of people.

## **2. What projects are you currently working on in GOVA Region 8?**

We just had a \$884,500 project approved at the state board level for Region 8. The project, called the Shenandoah Valley Center for Advanced Learning, will increase the pool of qualified candidates in the transportation and logistics and light manufacturing industry clusters by adding new career education and technical programs for industrial maintenance and aviation technology. This project will address critical needs to upgrade equipment to modern standards and technologies and will train apprenticeship students in precision machining, welding, and auto and diesel technology.

## **3. What made you interested in economic development?**

Most of the people involved in economic development do it for the right reasons – to be a part of growing an economy. We're doing something important for our community, when we're helping companies create jobs and invest in our area. For most of my career, I worked in the engineering industry and helped local and regional governments develop land and sites to sell. In my semi-retirement, I love riding by the sites we worked on and seeing new buildings and lots of cars in the parking lots. It's a very fulfilling profession.

## **4. What is one of your proudest accomplishments over the course of your career?**

I felt like I had reached my career goals when I had the opportunity to serve on the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) board and serve as president of the Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA). I am proud of my roles in developing the Virginia Business Ready Sites program at VEDP as well as the GO Virginia program after it passed through the General Assembly in 2016. Also, my teams were part of the development of the Botetourt Center at Greenfield and the Wood Haven project, and I enjoy seeing those sites as I go by on I-81.

## **5. What have you learned from being a part of CECE's Advisory Board?**

Through serving on the advisory board, I've learned how extensive the reach of the center is and how many projects it is involved in across the commonwealth. It has been an honor to serve on the board and watch the meetings evolve.

## **6. Are there any projects that you would like to collaborate with CECE on in the future?**

Scott Tate and I have talked about possible opportunities for our two GO Virginia regions to collaborate. I'd like to see that conversation get started and blossom into something. I don't know what it's going to look like at the end, but that's part of the fun of the job.

## **7. What is a favorite book that you would recommend?**

I'm a big reader. I read the Bible every day, so that's my favorite book. In the last year, I read *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver, which takes place in Southwest Virginia and focuses on the opioid crisis. It's fiction but is the truest fiction I've ever read. That is the book I tell everybody they have to read.

## **8. What is your favorite place to travel?**

My husband and I have been to the Caribbean 20 times in the past 25 years. We spent two weeks there this past June celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary in the British Virgin Islands. But anywhere I haven't been is my favorite next place to go.

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## News roundup

[City of Roanoke named among the Top 100 Employers for Interns on Virginia Intern Day](#) (Center for Economic and Community Engagement Blog)

[Graduate students hold Park\(ing\) Day event in Downtown Christiansburg](#) (Center for Economic and Community Engagement Blog)

[High schoolers get their feet wet in groundbreaking aquaculture program](#) (Virginia Tech News)

[My summer with the Town of Blacksburg](#) (Center for Economic and Community Engagement)

[V-TOP now offering staffing agency services to help employers recruit and place interns](#) (Center for Economic and Community Engagement Blog)

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## We're hiring! Help us spread the word.

### Project Coordinator

CECE is hiring a project coordinator for the Talent Pathways Initiative, which seeks to build alignments between education and targeted industry clusters in GO Virginia Region 2.

Apply here: <https://careers.pageuppeople.com/968/cw/en-us/job/527223/project-coordinator>

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